

## THE ENTOMOLOGY OF THOMAS BOREMAN'S POPULAR NATURAL HISTORIES

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It is difficult, on this side of the Atlantic, to accumulate sufficient information about Thomas Boreman and his natural history books, for an adequate account. Nevertheless, because he has been omitted from entomological bibliographies, it seems desirable to take some notice of him, even at this late date.

According to the British Museum Catalogue there is attributed to Thomas Boreman a work entitled, "A Description of three hundred animals: viz. Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Serpents, and Insects: With a particular account of the whale-fishery: extracted out of the best authors. . . . Illustrated with copper plates. London, 1730." Considering the numerous later editions, it must have had a considerable degree of popularity. There is a copy of the third edition, 1736, "printed for R. Ware," in the Harvard College Library.\* The British Museum Catalogue lists a seventh edition dated London, 1753, and an eleventh edition in the John Carter Brown Library is dated 1774.

Following the success of what was apparently the first edition in 1730, a supplement was brought out. I have not been able to locate a copy, but from notices in several of Boreman's works it dealt with "A Description of a great Variety of Animals and Vegetables: viz. Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Insects, Plants, Fruits and Flowers. Extracted from the most considerable Writers of Natural History; and adapted to the use of all Capacities, but more particularly for the Entertainment of Youth. Illustrated with above Ninety Copper-Plates, whereon is curiously engraven every Animal and Vegetable described in the whole Book." This supplement went into a second edition and there may have been more. According to an advertisement in one of Boreman's works, this supplement covered accounts of forty-nine "curious" insects, including the silk worm, the "tarantula spider, whose bite causes a melancholy madness, that nothing but a merry tune will relieve," the ant, and the "blue-fly."

\* This Library also has copies of the 1812 and 1829 editions.

In 1739, there appeared, "A description of some curious and uncommon creatures, omitted in the description of three hundred animals, and likewise in the supplement to that book, designed as an addition to those two treatises, for the entertainment of young people. Compiled by the same hand. In which is included, the natural history of those great curiosities, the chimpanzee, male and female, brought from Angola, on the coast of Guinea, and lately publickly shown in London. Illustrated with sixteen copper-plates, whereon is neatly engraven the figure of each animal. London: Printed for Richard Ware, at the Bible and Sun in Amen-Corner: and Thomas Boreman bookseller in Guildhall. MDCCXXXIX." This book (16 × 10 cm. p. [i-iv.] 1-88 [i-iv]), first shown to me by Mr. Wilbur Macey Stone, aroused my interest in Boreman by reason of its entomological accounts on pages 59 to 67.

The three foregoing titles, in which Boreman had a hand, were all that I could locate relating to natural history. From the John Carter Brown Library, I obtained photostats of the entomological portion (p. 201-213) of "A Description of Three Hundred Animals, viz. Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Serpents, and Insects. With A particular Account of the Manner of their Catching of Whales in Greenland. Extracted from the best Authors, and adapted to the Use of all Capacities. Illustrated with Copper-Plates, whereon is curiously engraven every Beast, Bird, Fish, Serpent, and Insect, described in the whole Book. The Eleventh Edition. Carefully corrected and amended. London: Printed for J. and F. Rivington, Hawes, Clarke and Collins, T. Caslon, S. Crowder, B. Law, F. Newbery, G. Robinson and H. Baldwin. MDCCCLXXIV." Although this was published forty-four years after the 1730 edition, I doubt if the corrections and changes were really extensive.

In this eleventh edition, the entomological portion, under the heading, "A Description of Insects," deals with relatively few insects. There is a general statement about caterpillars. "Some of them are rough, hard, and stiff; some are soft, smooth, and tender; some horned either in the Head or Tail; others without Horns; all have many feet." And in addition there are such statements as,—"The Butterfly is the Insect in Perfection; the

Caterpillar, Grub, or Worm, are certain Mimicks, or Disguises of it for a Time, in which one and the same Animal is circum-vested by Nature, for various Uses, viz. with the Disguise of a Caterpillar, that it may eat this or that food; but of a Grub or Worm, that its joints may be finished or hardened." Apparently the "grub or worm" refers to the pupal stage. The entire caterpillar account consists of less than two pages and is so general as to be worthless except to a very, very general reader.

The next insect is the louse, and in old popular writings on insects, this creature was always treated with a certain amount of levity. The present book is no exception. According to it, "The Louse is a Creature so officious, that it will be known to every one at one Time or other; so busy and so impudent, that it will be intruding itself in every one's Company; and so proud and aspiring withal, that it fears not to trample on the best, and affects nothing so much as a Crown, feeds and lives very high, and that makes it so saucy, as to pull any one by the Ears, that comes in its Way, and will never be quiet till it has drawn Blood; it is troubled at nothing so much as at a Man that scratches his Head, as knowing that Man is plotting and contriving some Mischief against it, and that makes it oftentimes skulk into some meaner and lower Place, and run behind a Man's back, though it go very much against the Hair; which ill-conditions of it have made it better known than trusted." This opening statement is followed by some descriptive matter which is valueless. For example, "the Head seems very round and tapering, ending in a very sharp Nose, which seems to have a small Hole, and to be the passage through which he sucks the Blood."

The remaining creatures are the flea, honey bee and scorpion and the account of the honey bee occupies most of the text. Accompanying the entire account are four full-page, crudely drawn illustrations of insects and of a bee-hive.

The entomology of "A description of some curious and uncommon creatures, omitted in the description of three hundred animals, and likewise in the supplement. . . ." London, 1739, is with one exception of the same general brand. This book includes travelers' accounts of the ravages of "locusts," passages from the Bible, and "the natural history of the Ephemeron."

This latter account, which is the best of the lot, was taken, sometimes with little change in wording from "Éphemeris Vita: or the Natural History and Anatomy of the Ephemeron. A fly that lives but Five Hours. Written Originally in Low-Dutch by Jo. Swammerdam, M.D., of Amsterdam. London. Printed for Henry Faithorne, and John Kersey, at the Rose in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1681," a translation by Edw. Tyson, M.D. Then there are moral reflections on the short life of the Ephemeron from various authors. The illustrations, as usual are crude and in some instances, terrible.

If Thomas Boreman had anything to do with these books, he was, in all probability, a compiler, one without much discrimination, because he put together observations, mistakes, worthless descriptions, etc., of naturalists, travelers, etc., as recorded in previous works. If anything good is included, it probably slipped in by mistake, and not because of the compiler's nice perception. Boreman was interested in sales. These in turn depended upon "reader interest," and like the average modern journalist, Boreman was concerned with the unusual, the strange, the grotesque, etc., rather than with sober facts, although it must be admitted that during Boreman's time, natural history was full of fallacies and suppositions, which were repeated over and over. Even today we are not entirely free of them. Boreman's accounts of animals other than insects appear to be written in the same vein but no doubt his readers were charmed with the statements about the "male pygmy, or chimpanzee," the white bear, the mermaid, the hooded-serpent, the fishing frog, etc. Although his popularizations were in most cases written for "young persons," I believe that many older ones enjoyed them. The prices of his natural history books were quite reasonable, not going above three shillings. Richard Ware, with whom he was associated, published other popular books, such as dictionaries, Persian and Turkish tales, the natural history of English song birds, the young clerk's assistant, housekeeper's pocket book, etc.

Thomas Boreman had his place of business or bookstall "near the two giants in Guildhall," the seat of the government of the City of London, and his publishing activities were not confined

exclusively to natural history books, According to Mr. Wilbur Macey Stone, he issued a political pamphlet in 1735 entitled "The History of Intriguing," and while he has been neglected for many years and justly so by naturalists, his memory retains a certain amount of greenness among collectors of children's books for his achievement in bringing out his Gigantick Histories, a series of ten little volumes,  $2\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{7}{8}$  inches, between 1740 and 1743. These miniature books for children, once deservedly popular and now exceedingly rare, covered such subjects as the history of the Guildhall Giants, the curiosities in the Tower of London, the history of the Cathedral of St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, etc., all of which and much more are entertainingly and interestingly set forth by Mr. Wilbur Macey Stone in his book "The Gigantic Histories of Thomas Boreman," which was published in an edition of 250 copies by the Southworth Press of Portland, Maine, in 1933. In conclusion, I might say that I regard Mr. Boreman more highly for his Gigantic Histories than for his natural histories.

